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MX

Ten out of ten...

Jeremy Van Horebeek is in sizzling form and there is nothing 'flat' about his ten consecutive podium finishes in MXGP in what is his second season in the premier class. Just three more trophies will equal Tony Cairoli's feat from 2013 and JVH keeps the Yamaha in the title chase

Photo by Ray Archer



PLAY



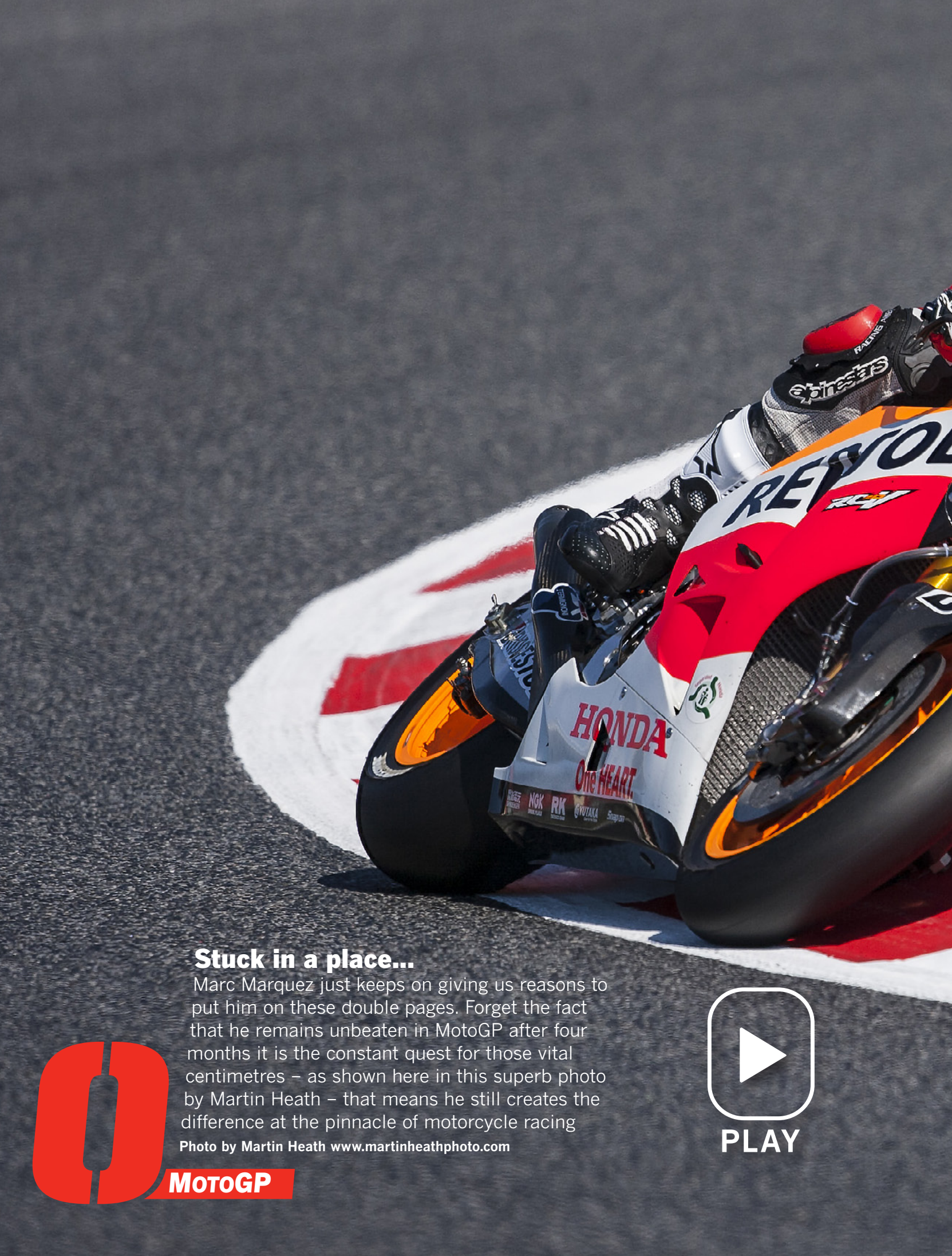
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Stuck in a place...

Marc Márquez just keeps on giving us reasons to put him on these double pages. Forget the fact that he remains unbeaten in MotoGP after four months it is the constant quest for those vital centimetres – as shown here in this superb photo by Martin Heath – that means he still creates the difference at the pinnacle of motorcycle racing

Photo by Martin Heath www.martinheathphoto.com



MotoGP



PLAY







AMA-MX

Stuck...

James Stewart rose to the heights at High Point for a resounding 1-1 victory but the Suzuki rider and former 'perfect' MX Champion has made the news for different reasons this week. Check out Steve Matthes' fascinating Blog on page 32 for the lowdown on JS7's current predicament

Photo by Simon Cudby





ZAC BELL

In the pits / The Bowen sunglasses

Photo: Dimitri Coste



SONIC YOUTH

GEICO Honda's Zach Bell races with the new Accuri Charger goggle and wears the Bowen sunglasses off the track.

On track / The Accuri Charger

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MX

GRAND PRIX OF GERMANY

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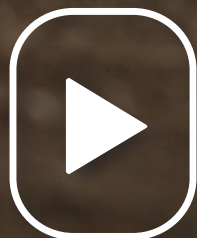
MXGP winner: Clement Desalle, Suzuki

MX2 winner: Jeffrey Herlings, KTM



DESALLE CLOSES IN

By Adam Wheeler, Photos by Ray Archer



PLAY

It's all in the wrist. Nagl (12) and Desalle (25) get a hefty percentage of their work towards race wins sorted within the crucial first seconds of the German GP motos

It was impossible not to compare the 2014 German Grand Prix to the '13 Motocross of Nations at Teutschenthal. Same track and same climate but this time not the same German 'big hitters' with Ken Roczen missing a major event on home turf for the first time since he won the Grand Prix around the Talkessel inclines so memorably as a fifteen year old in 2009. The fans thought they had Max Nagl, but it is fair to say beforehand that there was only a glimmer of hope around the factory Honda star. He sunk in the heat of the Lausitzring in 2013 and was now coming back from a broken scaphoid after missing the previous six rounds.

When a rider comments that he wants to return from injury when he is "100%" then you take it with a pinch of salt. Their livelihood and career options depend on being out on the track. Tommy Searle came back earlier than expected and Ken De Dycker is a ghost at the rear of the MXGP pack since persisting from a winter wrist-snap at round four. Nagl was making the same noises and although it was clear in the second moto in Germany that the diminutive star was off the boil in terms of his race fitness (he was seventh) the first moto however showed that Max could actually prosper and pop his head out of the long Roczen shadow that obscures German motocross.

Rockstar Suzuki's Clement Desalle will look back at this event as one in which he responded emphatically to his mistake in Italy the previous Sunday and capitalised on Red Bull KTM's Tony Cairoli's illness and dodgy gut (the antibiotics causing repeated toilet trips right up to the start of the second moto) to get his title push back on course with just a 25 point difference in the standings to the Sicilian. Desalle's starts were key but even the Belgian was outstripped by Nagl in Moto1 and it is the 26 year old that will leave the edition of this GP at Teutschenthal embellished in the memory. The same first moto was the best of the bunch on Sunday as Nagl fought hard to fend off the Suzuki in a tense finale to the thirty minutes and two laps and behind Steven Frossard in third, Yamaha's Jeremy Van Horebeek was having to use every nuance of strength and racecraft to keep a desperate Cairoli at bay; it was an epic tussle with Cairoli often giving the Yamaha 'three wheels'.







Passing was a tall - but familiarly awkward - order at Talkessel that was rutty, slightly more open in terms of lines but somehow stonier than usual. Eating roost is an occupational hazard but more than one rider described the German pebbles and rocks as akin to bullets. "That was pretty painful because those things hurt, even through the chest protector," said Van Horebeek who missed perhaps his best chance so far to grab a maiden MXGP win due to two average starts but has now amassed a staggering ten consecutive podiums in a streak unparalleled since the days of his mentor Stefan Everts in 2006.

Projectiles aside Nagl knew his prowess off the line - regardless of fitness levels - was a major weapon and he made sure of its potency when it mattered. That he couldn't do the same in the second race (after tangling with Cairoli out of the gate) forced his predicament in the mid top ten and allowed riders like Dennis Ullrich, perhaps the next hope for German fans, to enjoy some laps at the sharp end.

Aletes such as Kevin Strijbos, Steven Frossard and David Philippaerts enjoyed their good and bad moments at Teutschenthal. Strijbos was second in Moto2 but wrestled with arm-pump. Frossard, third early on, then bizarrely retired in the second race due to a goggle problem while Philippaerts grabbed a decent sixth in the second after front brake trouble in the first. Sixth overall and now fifth in the world championship was Hitachi KTM's Shaun Simpson whose similar model of consistency to Van Horebeek, but at the front of the second group, is paying real dividends. Fellow Brit Tommy Searle will simply not score podium finishes with a standard production KX450F engine getting out of the gate and it is hard to imagine the former MX2 championship runner-up remaining with CLS for another season; apparently a factory ride with Honda or Husqvarna beckon and he will have to make his choice after the absent Gautier Paulin settles on his place of employment for 2015; something the Frenchman should already have done in Italy.

The talk of 'passing' barely applied to the MX2 class where Jeffrey Herlings accrued seven wins from the last seven and is unbeaten in a Grand

Cairolì (left) wonders how he will get through another GP of adversity. Germany was JVH's (below) best chance to seize a first win in MXGP but the Belgian was also below-par physically and it showed in his starting prowess. Tim Gajser (this page) was the second fastest MX2 rider all weekend long

MXGP GERMANY



PLAY

Prix overall result since the his KTM expired at Teutschenthal at the end of 2012.

'84' extended his perfect run for the season, became the first Dutch victor at Talkessel and simply disappeared from the first lap in both races. When will his brilliance start to be eroded by inexplicability if he decides on another year in MX2? Records and age might be his chief motivations to remain in MX2 (although good pay days and KTM's keenness to retain their supremacy since 2008 in the category can count) and this sport can also throw mechanical problems or injury into the mix but there is very little challenge for Herlings in MX2 and thus diminished interest in the class. Closest rider in Germany on this occasion was the excellent Gariboldi Honda's Tim Gajser who was a clear 2-2 for his second podium result of the year. The third step was owned by Jordi Tixier for the third event in a row and amid gossip that he is tiring of Herlings' hegemony in KTM and wants a new pasture for his last MX2 term in 2015. Credit for the fight of riders like Dylan Ferrandis and Romain Febvre, and Arnaud Tonus shed what little chance there was of the 2014 title with a blow to the head and shoulder dislocation on the second lap of practice Saturday morning. Indications from CLS point to a hoped return in Sweden in two weeks.

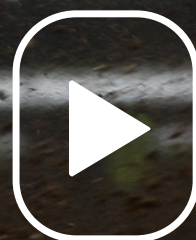
It is to Scandinavia that MXGP travels in the first weekend of July with the trip to Finland and Hyvinkaa following hard upon. The premier class is arguably at its most interesting for several years as round twelve of seventeen approaches at Uddevalla. Two riders are still in the mix against Cairoli (Van Horebeek is 37 points away) and Desalle is poised for his best title lilt yet. "It is a difficult question to answer. Maybe yes," he said concerning his chances of keeping in the frame. "I don't want to be crazy about looking at the championship points and just give my best on the bike each moto." Desalle will certainly need more wins and as many points as possible in Sweden, Finland and Czech Republic (normally a banker for the Belgian) before entering Cairoli's 'backyard' in Lommel, Belgium.



41 Grand Prix wins for 19 year old Jeffrey Herlings and the Dutchman is not done with victory. In Sweden next week the KTM rider is expected to announce yet another term in MX2 and attempt one more crown. That's bad news for factory Suzuki rider Jeremy Seewer, who inked a fresh two year deal with the company after an impressive rookie campaign so far. Despite all the gossip, Ryan Villopoto insisted he had another year of obligations in the U.S. before he could consider contesting Grand Prix. Monster Energy - expected to help fund a GP deal for the AMA champ - simply said: "It is up to Ryan what he wants to do."

MXGP GERMANY





PLAY





The new clock (showing the race time both ways for a simple guide to moto duration for fans) was a giveaway. Expect the new Tag Heuer timing deal for MXGP to be announced very soon



Cairoli eats roost and wasn't eating much else through the weekend. Desalle and Brian Hsu (EMX125) gave Suzuki two winners in Germany. Shaun Simpson (here) rode to sixth and put a privateer KTM into the top five of the MXGP world championship standings



"What are we doing then?"
Tense times for Gautier Paulin and KRT until the Frenchman decides on a contract for 2015. He is already two weeks late with his choice





Gajser flies on the works CRF250F. Little is known about the Slovenian's team-mate for 2015 on the HRC bikes. Spaniard Jorge Zaragoza was rumoured for the berth...





Pole Position holder Kevin Strijbos continues to suffer with his arm-pump. The Belgian is a solid fourth in the championship and is bound to add to his tally of four podiums in the remaining rounds





CLASSIFICATION & WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

MXGP OVERALL RESULT

Riders

1	Clement Desalle, BEL	Suzuki
2	Max Nagl, GER	Honda
3	Jeremy Van Horebeek, BEL	Yamaha
4	Kevin Strijbos, BEL	Suzuki
5	Tony Cairoli, ITA	KTM

MXGP WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP STANDINGS (AFTER 11 OF 17 ROUNDS)

Riders	Points
1 Tony Cairoli	477
2 Clement Desalle	452
3 Jeremy Van Horebeek	440
4 Kevin Strijbos	350
5 Shaun Simpson	242

MX2 OVERALL RESULT

Riders

1	Jeffrey Herlings, NED	KTM
2	Tim Gajser, SLO	Honda
3	Jordi Tixier, FRA	KTM
4	Valentin Guillod, SUI	KTM
5	Romain Febvre, FRA	Husqvarna

MX2 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP STANDINGS (AFTER 11 OF 17 ROUNDS)

Riders	Points
1 Jeffrey Herlings	494
2 Arnaud Tonus	389
3 Jordi Tixier	369
4 Romain Febvre	358
5 Dylan Ferrandis	343

THE PRICE OF PRESENCE...

By Adam Wheeler

There is a valuable commodity in MXGP that is not quite as noticeable or as sexy as wins or podiums. In the last four-five years especially – with the escalation of long-term injury problems – it has come more to the fore: ‘presence’. The sheer act of ‘being’. A simple look at the Yamaha factory team provides an illustration.

After six years with a major sponsor and a three rider line-up in the premier class the Rinaldi squad seemed to defy logic for 2014 with one rider, and a virtual MXGP rookie at that. It shows just how fruitless planned strategies and contingencies can be. For two seasons Yamaha had minimal results or even representation in MXGP due to injuries and then banked on Jeremy Van Horebeek to reset and re-establish their very capable YZ450F technology and the Belgian posted 7 podiums in a row. It is a scenario impossible to predict and after the misfortune of 2012 and 2013 it was a bold move by the Dutch and Italians to opt for a strong one-rider set-up. It paid off. Yamaha are back.

Around this time a host of talented and fast athletes are waiting for riders at the top of the supposed pecking order to make decision on their futures, prospects and employers. In MXGP that means anybody who can hold a light to Tony Cairoli. Not many, and involves salary figures that touches almost seven digits (if the latest rumours are to be believed). Justifiable in some

respects but it still signifies an investment in ‘potential’ rather than ‘delivery’. There is never a sure thing in motorsport, as much from the manufacturer of the machinery as there is from the athlete’s side, but there are different racers and different ploys. Watching Van Horebeek every weekend it is clear that he is not yet near Cairoli’s level to actually win races and usually cannot match the speed that pops up from the likes of Clement Desalle and Gautier Paulin, the leading protagonists of MXGP at this current time. Van Horebeek’s season has been far more emphatic however due to his results and the kind of consistency he showed in his maiden term on the 450 in 2013.

In the end JVH should be banking a contract improvement/extension that will also lift him to the standard that Desalle and Paulin are demanding. It might be a large leap from podium runner to race victor but the Belgian has laid all the groundwork and has augmented his profile and career by producing exactly what Yamaha needed.

The top ten of MXGP is full of riders with immense promise, but with their own stories behind their position or progress. At OTOR we’re a fan of what Briton Shaun Simpson brings to the show and as the KTM rider sits sixth in the world it is curious as to why he is not attracting more factory interest.



The Scot celebrated that stunning triumph at Lierop last year but otherwise is a reliable and dependable part of the second group of MXGP behind the podium contenders. Since a blameless horrific leg break in 2009 Simpson has finished each season (unlike Paulin, Desalle, Steven Frossard, David Philippaerts, Max Nagl) and racked-up points without pause. It is the kind of 'long-term championship approach' that riders like Philippaerts (Italy's first MXGP champion) and Steven Frossard (championship runner-up in 2011) are desperate to get back to. While each manufacturer wants the Desalles, Paulins and Herlings to hog TV pictures, advertising images and lead the racing effort the 'Simpsons' of the paddock – of which there seem to be few judging by the harsh injury rate each year across eighteen GPs – are a cost-effective and essential investment in ensuring that the bike and sponsors are out in front of the public each weekend (Simpson has also been racing British, Dutch and Belgian championship events) and all the money and hours poured into the truck and development is also vindicated.

If Simpson continues in the confines of the Hitachi Construction KTM UK squad or whether he gets an offer to transfer his continuity to another brand and crew then the message of 21st century motocross has to be out there somewhere: winning is the golden egg but preservation is becoming the new payoff.



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TREY CANARD
Team Honda Muscle Milk

A BIG ISSUE...

By Steve Matthes

The news that a rider tested positive for a performance enhancing drug swept through the pits at round four of the Lucas Oil Pro Motocross Championships held at High Point raceway. Honestly I just chalked it up to the usual gossip. After all, I hadn't heard it from anyone official so why bother digging into it? I've heard this song and dance before but I knew there was some testing by USADA (United States Anti-Drug Administration) at the previous round at Lakewood, Colorado.

A phone call on Monday confirmed this wasn't the usual rumor. A rider HAD tested positive but NOT from Lakewood. It was from Seattle supercross two months earlier. The Monster Energy Supercross series does not use USADA for testing but in accordance with its pact with the FIM, it uses WADA (World Anti-Drug Administration).

We've never had any rider found positive since 2009 when the supercross folks started testing and in the outdoors, it's just been activated this year. This was indeed a big deal. The rider in question was announced last Thursday when Yoshimura Suzuki (getting in front of this scandal - good move!) dropped a press release announcing that its rider James Stewart was the positive "doper" and they were confident that the matter would be resolved.

The next day an FIM PR arrived saying that Stewart was "provisionally" suspended for testing positive for an amphetamine and that he has a right for a B sample to be tested.

So where are we at now? Well, it's widely believed that Stewart's amphetamine was the drug Adderall which is prescribed for attention deficit disorder or ADD for short. Now depending on what you read or who you talk to, Adderall can be a help to focus and concentrate on the task at hand IF you don't have ADD. If you do have ADD and have been on Adderall for a while its effects are lessened. Without knowing Stewart's medical history it's hard to say if his Adderall (if it was that) was indeed performance enhancing. Then again, WADA thinks it is and they're the ultimate judge and jury in this case.

What we do know about all this is that it's a mess right now. Does Stewart get suspended for the motocross series which is not governed by WADA or really, the AMA either? Daytona Motorsports Group purchased AMA Pro Racing (different from the AMA) and just kept the name in use. So the AMA in supercross is different from the AMA in motocross...just to keep things more confusing. And I don't have to tell you that USADA is different from WADA do I?

But yet, deep down USADA has ties to WADA and the motocross series DOES hand out an AMA national title to its champions. There are some deep-rooted, back door ties from the people who tested and suspended James Stewart to the people who currently run the motocross series.

As far as Stewart's side of things, there is a legal prescription for the amphetamine in question and through a mistake from someone in



the Stewart camp, WADA did not receive said prescription. There's no one going on the record from the rider's side but my sources inside that camp say this is the real story. But WADA doesn't do the "Oops, I forgot to tell you about this" real well.

For Stewart it's yet another controversy that the fans who don't already like him can use to fuel their fire. Stewart himself is coming off a marvelous 1-1 ride at High Point that put him back into the mix of a guy who could win the 450MX title. This is the last thing he needs as he tries to rebound from his slow start to the national motocross series.

What's going to happen? As I sit here and type this, I have no idea. People involved in the motocross side are saying this is a supercross issue and "they" have to figure it out. And if you don't think that Feld Motorsports (the promoters of supercross) aren't sniffing around to see what the sanctions are to one of their top riders then you're nuts. And in the meantime we wait for Stewart to appeal, the B sample to be tested and, wait for it, the Lakewood USADA testing results to be made public. If Stewart has been taking this substance the entire time (legally) then one would think it would also show up in his motocross tests as well.

And if they come back positive? Well, hang on because this thing will get nuttier than it already is.





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Photos: S. Cudby, H. Mitterbauer

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23

THE F THE C THE C

By Adam Wheeler, Photos by Ray Archer

Age and Absenteeism; two hot issues hitting MXGP so we chatted to a number of people in the paddock, chiefly bosses of the satellite teams arguably at the centre of the whirlpool, for some perspective...

MXGP has becoming increasingly about numbers in the last five years. The 23 age limit for the MX2 class is highly polemic (as you'll read below) and the merits of the regulation is something we have tackled here in OTOR in the past. However, is the ruling affecting the presence of riders in the premier MXGP category? Or are the declining numbers in the gate caused by other factors like the costs of racing and relentless injuries? We tried to find opinion from a cross section of the MXGP paddock on some of the topical themes floating around the sport.

WHO WE SPOKE TO

Tony Cairoli, MXGP World Champion
Steve Dixon, Team Principal of Bike it Yamaha
Romain Febvre, Wilvo Nestaan Husqvarna Factory
Giacomo Gariboldi, Team Owner Gariboldi Honda
Sylvain Geboers, Team Principal Rockstar Energy
Steve Guttridge, Kawasaki Motor Europe Racing
Steven Lettani, Team Owner, 24 MX Honda Racing
Giuseppe Luongo, President, Youthstream
Jacky Martens, Team Principal, Wilvo Nestaan
David Philippaerts, Team Owner and rider, D
Tyla Rattray, Red Bull IceOne Husqvarna racing
Tommy Searle, CLS Monster Energy Kawasaki
Steve Turner, Team Owner, Wilvo Forkrent KT

RULE GATE COST

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acing

n Husqvarna Factory Racing (MX2)
P19 Yamaha Racing
ing, 2008 MX2 World Champion
ki rider, MXGP, first rider to be hit by 23 rule
TM (MXGP)



THE EFFECTS OF 23

Philippaerts: The '23' is not easy. I remember when I started to go fast I was 21. To win a title and move up in this time is difficult! Some riders are ready to move at that age but others are not. Maybe increasing the age to 26 or 27 is better but a point system would be good, or when a rider reaches a level of ability. People like Herlings and Tonus should be moving up. The problem is the restriction of age; it should be about ability.

Gariboldi: Motocross in Europe is the only class that has this limit. It seems in the USA the riders are already moving to 450s when they are 20 or 21 and it is seen as a step in their careers. In Europe we have found that in the past older riders want to hang around in MX2 because it might have been a bit easier compared to the premier class. Now they are forced to go. It is good for the youngsters.

Cairolì: I don't think the MX2 rule can stay because many guys cannot race the bigger bikes. I think all the support classes that we have with the GPs now is the place to be for the young guys. MX2 and MXGP should be open for everyone and all ages.

Rattray: I can understand why is it there...the idea is that MXGP is the premier class, which it is. I can see that side of it because you don't want people like myself or Cairolì going back and winning races and not letting the young guys come through but I can also see the side of the riders. For a guy like Tonus this is his breakthrough year and he's been injured a lot but he's run out of time. He is only just getting his confidence back. In my view, at the end of the day, it should be a world championship and not a 'under-23 world championship'. It shouldn't matter if you are 25 or 28 and you want to race MX2. There will always be some-



one coming up and winning races. It [the age rule] mainly sucks for the guys who come up to MXGP and there are not enough teams. To win a world championship you need to be on factory equipment.

Febvre: This is my third year in MX2; not so many. For me it is a bit early I feel [to move]. I have some GP experience but compared to other riders who have started earlier then not so much; like my team-mate last year Jake Nicholls who had six or seven years on the 250.

Luongo: The age limit regulation in the MX2 class gives a lot of possibilities to the young talented riders coming from the European Championships to find a place in a top MX2 team with a good salary, and the MX2 talented riders who go to the MXGP class will find easily a good place in a top MXGP team. Thanks to all the policies the level of MXGP is also much higher and we believe in less than five years time all the thirty riders in MXGP will be superstars. Wearing the MXGP logo on the race shirt is something exclusive where only the best of the best deserve to wear it; something like playing in the Football UEFA Champions League, a player who plays in the Champions League only once in his life will remember it forever.

Gariboldi: I think the 23 year is a good rule because we have seen the good riders that move up into MXGP can find their place in teams. The limit opens gaps for the young guys from the European championship, which wouldn't be the case if the old ones can stay or come back. We see five or six new riders come into MX2 each year. I think it works OK.

Guttridge: You will get this situation where guys will come up from MX2 and if you see some special potential then manufacturers might be tempted to take a risk with them for MXGP. There is no guarantee that the results will transfer and there are some that cannot make it happen in MXGP...Then there is nowhere for them to go except to be pushed out. Even just to stay in the MXGP paddock is getting harder and harder.

Geboers: The interest of the class will shift totally when the outstanding young rider that is there at the moment [Jeffrey Herlings] moves into MXGP. I think if it is based on performance, like in the USA, then this is a much better way, with the possibility for some to go back.

Febvre: I think the point system in the USA is better but I don't think they will change it here.

Luongo: The level of MXGP riders is already extremely high, we saw that during the last two editions of the Motocross of Nations and this will continue to increase; next year other young talented riders will enter MXGP from MX2 and the level will be even higher than today.

Geboers: Some teams invest in a young rider and he reaches 23 and then has to leave because they cannot operate or be active in the MXGP class. Cairoli is a good example; for his whole career he has been with De Carli and they were able to move categories together but not everybody can do that. Having the freedom is very important.

Lettani: I think it is a good thing. It means teams can make contracts for a few years for young riders and give them a chance with the 23 year rule in mind. People like Tonus eventually have to move on and it lets others develop and get near the podium. It also boosts numbers for the MXGP class, we don't have many

riders there sometimes and it feels like every year a little bit less.

Martens: The rule will be a problem for the next generation in MXGP because there are not many teams. We have been asked to take an extra MXGP rider but it is impossible due to budget. The riders in MX2 are becoming very expensive because there is quality there but for winning then just four-five riders maximum. In MX2 there are more teams than riders, which makes it more complicated! The riders that need to move into MXGP find the opposite scenario.

Luongo: Some years ago we concentrated our program on the TV, media and better presentation and to bring the World Championship worldwide. Today the fast riders make good money in MX2 and especially in MXGP, and this will continue to rise over the next years. This is why we created the European Championships which are really the base of our sport and where young talented riders are formed. At every event there is very tough competition with an average of sixty riders per class, and if you see riders like Herlings, Roczen, Paulin, Musquin, Van Horebeek, Tixier, Coldenhoff, Tonus, Guillod, Febvre, Ferrandis, Charlier, Tonkov, Pocock, Gajser and Seewer came from the European Championships and are currently amongst the top of MXGP, MX2 and US Championships. Having young 13 year olds race on the same (very technical and demanding) race tracks as the MXGP in front of big crowds, filmed on TV and watch by professional teams and manufacturers help them grow very fast and start to get used to the professional world; this, plus the marketing of the World Championship brings the level of MXGP and MX2 very high, and compared to eight years ago when Youthstream took the management of the Championships the value of the talented riders has been multiplied by three.

Martens: There are not enough bikes [in MXGP] and that is a problem for sure. Some young riders at 23 will have to stop. If you look at someone like Valentin Teillet [former European Champion] then he is a very good rider but ran out of time.

Turner: If you look at the current system with Europeans pushing into MX2 and then MX2 pushing into MXGP – in theory – it should work with the 23 age rule, but I also understand that it will push some MXGP riders out. There will be some struggling for a ride because there are not enough teams or those that are here cannot afford to run three bikes instead of two. The system should work but there is a bottleneck because we need another five MXGP teams.



RIDERS AND QUANTITIES IN THE GATE FOR MXGP

Luongo: In MXGP, quantity is not necessary but absolute quality is a must. I have spoken with some famous MXGP riders with long careers behind them and they confirm that the level of competition has never been so high as it is today. Each rider has to fight hard for every position. The actual system and regulations are very good, we need now to work on the fine-tuning and continue to develop the Championships.

Gariboldi: It is not to do with the age limit. To bring this [full gates] back we need to open the qualification system like it was in the past. This is the only way to put forty in the gate. Saturday has to be open, and the fee for the riders has to be eliminated. This is the only change I would make to the rules and format we have now.

Cairolì: I think 30 is a good number for the gate. We usually cannot make it to that and I think if we did not ask too much money for it then it would be full all the time.

Searle: It doesn't make any difference to be honest. On the TV you only see them off the start and around the first corners and then you think 'there's a lot of people' or 'there's not a lot of people'. Anybody that comes to race GPs from national championships cannot do it because the level is that good now, especially at the front. The level is good through the pack. You will always get the best riders in the world at GPs. There will be some that could fill that 15-30 gap and then they don't see that it is worth doing. I don't see it as a big issue.

Rattray: What you want to see is a full gate in MX2 and MXGP. If you want to race a Grand Prix then you need 1000 euros. In the U.S. it is 250 dollars and you get prize money. I can understand guys like De Reuver [Marc] who have pulled the plug because racing should never cost you money. Yeah, maybe in the beginning when you are starting you have to pay but if you are near the top ten then you are close to the top group in the world. If you can run in a Grand Prix field then this means you are one

of the fastest in the world and this shouldn't cost you. What would help the sport in Europe is giving something back. There is not much but it would help those guys that want to do a circuit of races in Europe and are good enough to do it.

Luongo: Today, we have about thirty teams with riders taking part in MXGP, MX2 and European Championships; the perfect for everyone would be for every team to have 2 riders in one class. For example: seven factory teams in MXGP (or more if other manufacturers enter) with two riders per team and to have seven support teams (one per manufacturer), and to have seven factory teams in MX2 (or more if other manufacturers enter) each with two riders in the MX2 class and to have several support teams with one or two riders and four riders in the European Championship (two in EMX125 and two in EMX250), and this is the direction we are going in.... then for sure maybe some manufacturers want to support more teams and others less.

Searle: If you are a good rider then you will get a space.

Cairolì: I try to understand but the problem also is that we have less people riding. I do like the idea of one main class with all the best guys riding – like in MotoGP – that should be nice.

Rattray: I was tenth in a moto this year but when you see it on TV it looks like I'm last because you have ten guys who are racing and another ten just riding around. There are two races; one for the Pros and another for the others. In America the guy who is in 24th is still going wide-open to make a pass and that's because there are forty guys on the gate.

Turner: I think it [the numbers] is irrelevant. It doesn't matter to me if there are 40, 30 or 25 on the line; why do you need a long tail? If the quality was there and you had 40 very decent riders...then that's different. If the gate has to be full just for the sake of it and fifteen of them are getting lapped after four laps then what's

the point? You won't see them on television and spectators won't be noticing. They could fill the gate easily if they wanted by not charging for wild-cards but why? It then works out that it would be cheaper for us to be a wild-card entry for the season! The gate number doesn't bother me and I don't see it as a negative. A lot of people whinge about it but – in my opinion – most are only concerned about the fast guys at the front.

Luongo: The good thing is if you see at every MXGP event held in Europe there are more than 150 riders (between World and European riders), this is much more than before when there was only the World Championship. This is what we want: to have a pyramid with a very large base with all the European Championships and a very sharp and shiny point with the MXGP riders. We believe the system is good; to prepare for their career riders must participate in the European Championship, then they can access to MX2 and then on to MXGP. If we want to continue with increasing the value of our Championship it must be exclusive, the more it is exclusive the more the young will dream to be there one day.



THE COST OF RACING

REACHING A GRAND PRIX

Cairolì: I think it is a big problem because it is not open. I think it is a little bit expensive for people to pay this amount of money for one race and they don't even know if they will get a good result or not.

Rattray: Even the European guys have to pay. Why cannot some be given as a purse pay out? Give the little guys something back so that when they race it encourages them. Make them work for something, so that racing can be a profession. When I used to qualify for a GP it was a 1000 euros back at you.

Geboers: What happened in the early years was that local riders could participate easily and in conditions or on tracks they knew well and could get inside the top five. They would come from nowhere and it would be the same in France, Italy and the UK. It is impossible these days because nobody will pay 1000 euros to enter and then all the other expenses of racing.

Luongo: I know there is some noise from a few old-fashioned fans that loved to have the World Championship like it was in the olden-days, where everyone could enter. There was qualifying and the best 40 could race. Apart from the fact if we made this system 50% of the teams would disappear but also we would have at every event 80 riders racing (40 MXGP and 40 MX2), instead of the 150 of today, and for the young riders it would be almost impossible to grow because after a few times of not qualifying many will stop. The way we are doing it is right because every weekend there is double the amount of riders racing, and everyone races at their own level with the possibility to grow and make the next step year by year.

Gariboldi: It [the entry fee per GP] is too much. If it went to a reasonable level then you

would still make the same amount because you would have increased demand for qualifying races or time practice on Saturday. For sure with 1000 euros then you will have only a few trying for the GP.

Luongo: It's not a question of money, it's a question of level. Last year in Matterley Basin we made a contest where all riders could enter MXGP for free of charge, we made a qualifying timed practice and the riders who were within the 108% of the average time of the top 10 MXGP riders could participate in the MXGP without paying any fee and also they could participate in the 2014 MXGP season without paying any fee. We promoted this strongly and then in the end we only had seven riders enter, only two qualified and one made some inquiries to race this year but nothing more.

Guttridge: It all comes down to money: if it costs less to be here, if you are paid to be here, if you don't pay to be here. All those kinds of things are obvious at first glance. If Youthstream wants a paddock full of factory teams then they just need to price everybody else out and the demand will go away. If they want extra teams in the paddock then they need to make it easier for them to be here.

Rattray: Maybe teams should pay for the riders to race – for what is provided over the season – but the current price seems kinda steep, especially for a wild-card.

Luongo: There are some places to enter wild card riders at the disposal of the national Federations and local organizers but the results have not been very positive; today the level of the MXGP class is so high so national stars are either already permanent riders in the MXGP class (and in this case they have the right level of competition) or they are really not on the

level. Take the example of the MXGP of France, when you see the results of the French Champion (who is a very good and experienced rider) you can understand it's not easy for a rider who races only on a national level to participate in MXGP; it's the same principle as to have a national road race rider and make them race in MotoGP. I know some old-fashioned fans would love this but the reality today is that in MXGP the level of the competition, the level of the bikes, the quality of the organization of the teams, the investment of the manufacturers, the professionalism and the speed of the MXGP riders is too high, they are simply on another planet, it's too difficult to enter in this world just for one time and to appear in the top fifteen. The MXGP riders, teams and manufacturers, and also Youthstream do not want to encourage riders with such a big difference to participate in the MXGP class, it's not beneficial for anyone.



RUNNING A TEAM

Gariboldi: The costs of running a team are going up for sure because of the overseas [Grands Prix]. For the European races it is more or less the same budget as before. Travelling is very expensive. We get 200 kilos of freight support from Youthstream, which is very good, but if they want to increase the amount of overseas races then I think they need a solution like Dorna [for MotoGP] where the freight is paid by the promoter. Teams can invest more in something else and reduce costs a little. This is if there are more than five overseas races. Five is already touching the limit for any team here in the paddock.

Philippaerts: I wanted to start a team as cheaply as I could but while aiming to have the same structure as everybody. I have a new truck, but I sold my motorhome. I now have a combination and with the awning out more or less the same metres as many other teams. Yamaha have helped me a lot this year, which was really important, with bikes, spares and materials. I worked a lot in the winter to get

as many parts as possible because I did not want to buy anything and I did not want to run standard stuff. The only thing I had to really spend on was the gas, but everybody pays for that. Everywhere we could save, we did. I make enough money to live. When you are a factory rider then you can bank and make savings. I get money from some personal sponsors but what doesn't go on living goes into the team because the team is my life and it is only possible this way.

Martens: The budget now is double, everything is much more expensive and you have to provide the complete package, with the physical training, the doctors, the team structure. The championship is more professional and nicely presented and we have more sponsors but with that we have to give back more. Just passes alone...in Valkenswaard [Dutch GP, round five] I had to buy 200, which was 10,000 euros! Trying to find a sponsor for that amount is not easy!

I think we have done a really good job altogether and I am happy with the level of operation of the team. Also the sponsors are pleased as well. I feel that once things have stabilised a little bit and we have some regularity then we will have some room to breathe.

Dixon: I agree with the scope for the world championship and I don't know if there is a way for any more help. People ask me "well, why don't they share the TV money?". I don't think they realise that it isn't like football. Youthstream have sponsors and have to provide a service to get them on TV and give it to channels. We have to find the budget to make the world championship. In F1 the biggest budget wins but here it is down to the rider on the track and ultimately most teams have a good bike now. You can bring a team up with riders.

Turner: It is too costly. We are lucky this year because we pulled in some new sponsors. Wilvo have extended their sponsorship and it is a godsend for us because it was getting pretty tough to keep justifying the outlay. We have made a massive effort this season to step up to being a worthy world championship team... but you cannot expect people to spend money they haven't got. More flyaway GPs makes it more expensive and overall it is very difficult.

Lettani: The cost is one thing and the work we need to do and the time we need to spend on racing is another. I say many times to the people in the team that I'm always amazed how it takes longer and longer to fix the same problems. What I mean is that in 2009, when we were having that good season with Clement [Desalle] everything was so easy. We had just one flyaway, in Brazil, and it was nothing. Since then it feels much harder every year to get the money in the pocket. You might be able to find the budget but if someone decides not to pay or pay too late it becomes more than a full-time job! My last two or three years, from

2011 to 2013, we didn't get good results. We expected better but it didn't happen. So at the end of '12 we decided to change strategy and enter two young riders. It was important to stabilise and make a plan after all the injuries. Slowly we are coming back...also with the help from Honda. It is more expensive to go to the overseas but the expenses for the riders are different compared to a few years ago. I would say it is now 30-40% more expensive for us to race.

Martens: Without the manufacturer it is impossible. It is impossible for us to run more bikes. Cleaning and presentation doesn't cost any money but testing and the process of bringing the riders where they have to be does.

Philippaerts: I had nothing, no family to help me set this up. Any money in the pocket went on motocross and I want to use my money for this sport. I needed a long time to make my decision. Many riders might stop here [GPs] and then go to Enduro but this is my life. I want to follow the likes of Geboers, Rinaldi, De Carli and before, De Groot. The next step is to be manager. We have started this project well and we will see at the end of the season [how it has gone]. The mechanic is happy and has already committed for another year so now we just need a couple more sponsors.

Gariboldi: Starting the team ten years ago I was putting 95% of the money. When the results were good and we won championships [European with Christophe Charlier in 2009] that amount went down every year. Now with the support of HRC we are fully covered for costs and expenses for the season. This is ideal, but it took me ten years to get here. I have been investing with my money and time for nine years and now I give my time...but at least I don't put my money.

Turner: I will probably spend as much this year as I did last season even though I have

more sponsors and more money coming in. We upped everything this year and each bike has a factory race kit. We have invested a lot to get up the ladder because I want us to be one of the top satellite teams and competing with the factories, which is a tough ask. It is a challenge.

Lettani: Money that you can find for the riders, with boots, clothes and helmets, is also small at the moment. The costs go up every year but for the riders it is going down.

Rattray: I will not go out there and race for peanuts. Risk my life and do all that training for nothing. It is not worth it.

Gariboldi: It depends on the rider because the salary makes a bit difference. If, for example, you found a young rider who doesn't need paying and is just looking for a good ride because he brings his own support then – with the overseas and a decent motorcycle – then it is around 300,000 euros to make a season. That is without the truck, workshop and vans. The set-up year could easily cost a million.

Dixon: The money usually comes from people that you know or people connected with the sport. We get a lot of technology from Cosworth but even now we have to buy parts. After a couple of years of free components even they have a bottom line. Not everybody can do something for nothing.

Luongo: Compared to some years ago the Championship is already excellent in terms of marketing, TV exposure and sponsorship. For sure we need to continue developing and investing in this direction, because, as the USA is already out of the economical crisis and Europe is following, over the next years we will see the results of the hard work made. We are already starting to feel this because today the large majority of sponsors come from USA and big European brands have joined us (it will be announced very soon). The same principle is happening for the teams. I am, however, not sure we need more new teams but all together we have to work to reinforce the existing ones.

Dixon: I would say we have ten actual cash sponsors. In the past I ran with many but ultimately it became a lot of work to please those sponsors. If you are getting a couple of thousand pounds from someone they then requires passes, shirts, looking after; you end up spending 80% of those funds as well as valuable time just on them. I think the only way to do it is to look for good title sponsors and try to work something from the TV exposure. I think the final two GPs will be critical and a sign of how people can manage budgets, me included.



Lettani: It is difficult for teams to find sponsors, so it is even harder for riders to do it year after year. My main sponsor in 2011 went bankrupt and I had to pay everything out of my own pocket. It gets to a point where you think 'I'll stop'. I also had that at the end of 2012... but then you think 'I have really good people here. I have the truck. I have the workshop and it is all paid'. It gives you the power to look at it and try again and start from zero. I started working now with Adri Van Beers. We didn't 'have' a team for the last one and a half years but Adri has good connections, is fair with sponsors and has started talking to bring some back. He will do the team management next year, bring old partners in and build something strong to keep going.

Philippaerts: More teams want to use three riders because two is not enough any more. You get halfway in the season and many riders are missing.

Guttridge: MXGP is the highest level of what we are promoting. As a branding exercise we need to be here to win and that means the best rider and the best bikes and best materials, no budget problems and no issues so that the guys can focus on what they are doing. If you did have extra riders then it carries a purpose but then adds a strain to factory teams to spread resources. It might negatively impact on your top guy. It is a tricky one.

Lettani: I think it is possible to run a third rider. Logistically it is not a big problem, we have the space in the workshop.

It is a matter of getting the extra parts and bikes, that's the priority. Everything increases by 33% more. I have it in mind. The best solution would be to have two permanent MXGP riders and another with an alternate calendar and someone we could work with at international races in France, Belgium and Sweden for our main sponsor. It is becoming hard to do that anyway with the MXGP guys because the calendar is full. The third rider could then fill-in with the injuries because he would already be part of the team. Another option would be to run a young rider in the Europeans but MXGP is our priority and also that of Honda.

Guttridge: Having three riders in factory teams is quite close to happening but you will end up with massive disparities in rider salaries to make it happen. It is basic economics. If one rider uses a lot of budget and you want to use a third then that last addition will have to take a lot less.

TEAMS BECOMING SELF-SUFFICIENT

Dixon: The manufacturer contributes about 20-25% of our income. Which from Yamaha is made up from the bikes that we ride and some spare parts. The biggest problem I have is that the bikes don't release their value until the end of the season. The rest come through private sponsors like Bike it, Brenmar and so on. This year we took on two extra riders to help fund costs. They get the benefit of technology and input from the team and it helps us with our cashflow. It is a lot more work but this year has been extremely hard for us because the bike has needed more development; in other words money, time and resources. Those first three flyaways were nice but heavy on the budget.



Geboers: It is just too expensive. The fundamentals are wrong now because you have to have money to race. Many young riders in MX2 are paying to have a ride and personally I don't like that. The situation is very difficult. Yes, we all want to look professional but the set-up is too much. If we want to cut costs then why not run it all on one day?

Turner: If you don't have money behind you then I don't think there is a chance of doing it properly. The alternative is to take paying riders, which is another compromise and I don't want to go down that route myself. I know some people have to do it to survive. Maybe it is the way it will go and a lot of motorsports are like that.

Guttridge: Supporting extra teams means more than just bikes and parts. It means a lot of time, emotion and support. There are always unforeseen costs that you or the team did not expect. Those teams are still there but they don't necessarily have the set-up to be able to go for the win, so what are you investing in?

Martens: It is very difficult. We started cutting the living of the riders and it is hard for them to go racing and expensive for the families. It might take two or three years for riders and families in the Europeans to start making money or not paying to race. In short, racing is too expensive. A rider with potential for a Grand Prix is out of pocket right away. I know from my own experience that getting support from a local shop or dealer will mean getting to the race is covered but then I knew if I qualified then I was not coming away at a loss.

Dixon: I've been here 25 years and before manufacturers used to put most of the budget in and pay for fuel and the expenses of the mechanics, and that has been the biggest change over the decades. They just don't sell the bikes that they used to and teams have had to learn to fund themselves. Youthstream think 'why should we put money in to promote the manufacturers?'. The money should come from the manufacturers and maybe it should be spread around more. This is my full-time job and I have to bring in everything to pay the wages and my wages. I cannot rely on anything else.

Turner: You have to give a budget to the presentation side. It is part of our job to look good for the sponsors. It gives sponsors confidence when you look good. The same with the bike, just to make it look the part. Everything has a knock-on cost but you have to make a budget for that side of it. It's expected now; we are putting on a show basically and part of that is aesthetics. I know it is a results-based business – for sure – but you have to have a combination of the two. I think we have the presentation side spot-on now and that kind of money is a lot at the outset but not year-on-year because we have our truck, we have our set-up; it is almost a one-off cost.

Dixon: We do private work through customers that have bought ex-team bikes and we make our own titanium parts. We try to be self-sufficient. We are probably one of the only teams where 'what comes in with the right hand goes out with the left' and there is no reserve. It can be difficult. It means some things become late because we don't have that bank of cash flow.



Gariboldi: I have reached my goal this year with HRC. Before I was struggling because I did not want to stay in the paddock just to 'stay' because I already have so many things to do. I want to win a championship and that is my interest to stay in motocross. When HRC came then I knew we had what we needed to win; a factory team and factory support...but this is it not easy to find. We did it because we made a good job.

Martens: Riders are different and there are cases like Jake Nicholls where he is ready to go in MXGP but there are others that are injured and run out of time or then lose their value because of one bad season. You cannot keep a rider for two years if there are no results. It is tight for us and also for them because of the expense.

CHOOSING A CLASS

Gariboldi: I would go where I can find the good riders. We did MXGP a couple of times, with Boissiere in 2011 and Philippaerts last year and the cost of the season is much less than in MX2 because you need less parts and development time. You don't need much for the engine because the bikes are so good now. MX2 requires more investment for tuning. Maybe it is more sensible to go in MXGP now.

Philippaerts: I have the place, I have the workshop so it is up to a brand who might be interested in finding a slot for a rider where they can provide the money to run him and the machinery. I proposed to Yamaha to run another MXGP bike because it is easy; same motorcycle, same parts, same work. With the 450 you can use the same engine for three or four GPs whereas in MX2 you have to make changes every round and it means more and more parts. Two MXGP riders would be better.

Dixon: Many years ago there were riders playing at being GP stars. Their dads bought them trucks, the manufacturer gave them bikes and they went and qualified and got their 400 quid. That money never paid for a mechanic or fuel or a truck. Now all the teams are structured so that they have good set-ups, workshops and good people around them; it is a commodity that the up-and-coming riders need to tap into. Why not sell it? On a bigger scale Pro Circuit sell parts to the public. On a smaller scale teams can sell most things like the technology, the knowledge, the training days.

Dixon: MX2 is not cheap to run. It is a lot more work and money for the engines. With the 450s you will be spending a lot on suspension – a full factory set is the cost of our development – and also the rider. If you want to be at the sharp end and getting good results then you need to be spending six figure numbers. Unless you want to be going for eight, nine, tenth positions then it is better to stick in an exciting class where you can innovate and use experience to get riders to the front. Obviously with Jeffrey [Herlings] at the moment it is difficult but if you look around there are riders improving and getting on the podium, like Ferrandis and Gajser. These are not riders that are experienced to begin with. Riders in MXGP are high commodities.



DIRECTIONS...

Lettani: If somebody wants to start then they will have to spend a lot of private money: as I did. In my case it is a little bit different I suppose because I have a bike shop and the racing was publicity but if somebody else does not have that connection with the two wheeled market then why make the investment?

Turner: Personally I think there are too many GPs. Fifteen is a good number and eighteen is a bit too many. We do the British Championship as well - and I know from Youthstream's point of view it is a bit rich for us to complain about too many GPs! – but it is important that we are there because a lot of our support comes from the UK with KTM and the sponsors. We have to do it at the moment.

Philippaerts: For sure I continue. I want to make proposals to brands because we have everything in place now, the structure, the mechanics and the system. We worked a lot with GET. We have small partnerships and it is working. I don't know whether I can run a second rider yet because I need to find more money, more manpower, more parts, more bikes. I am open to anything.

Rattray: It will be good for the sport to see prize money come back. It is sad that the sport that has gone to being all about the money and teams would rather hire a guy who can finish sixth who can bring in backing. There are only a certain percentage of guys actually making the money whole the rest are paying to ride. It is going the same way as MotoGP. In the part of my career when I was in Europe it was not like that but the economy was good then.

Febvre: There are not many teams and the factories all want the best riders. If you are the second or the third rider on a team then it is also a difficult situation. I feel that it will be difficult for me to find a factory bike next year in MXGP.

Geboers: The actual motorcycles, compared to ten years ago, are much easier for the user. Before they needed to work on the jetting and sometimes destroyed engines. These days everything is computerised and taken care of automatically. Someone at sometime decided that we needed four-strokes. If we are thinking only about the sport then the FIM should have said 'two-strokes only'...and we would have seen which factories would have followed. It would be cheaper and four-strokes have not brought anything to our sport; heavier bikes, more powerful and noisy which has meant more cost for servicing the motorcycles and the closure of tracks...a lot of problems. The two-stroke was nice...beautiful.

Guttridge: I think we have to remember where it [MXGP] came from. It is a grass roots sport. Something where a modest family can back a kid and he can make it through to the top by going through those stepping stones. We need those extra teams to be able to make the career ladder for the next generation and I think that is where we are struggling now. You will get a situation where you will see the same riders circling around. On the other side the European programme and the other classes are promoted well and they have their place. It is good in a lot of ways.



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OXIDE
SERIES

**'TYRANT'
GOOGLES**

2014
COLLECTION



NEW GROUND

By Adam Wheeler, Photos by JP Acevedo

THE STX RR IS LEATT'S PROTOTYPE OFFERING TO AUGMENT THE SAFETY OF ROAD RACERS AND MOTORCYCLISTS EVERYWHERE AND MOTOGP LEGEND COLIN EDWARDS IS SPEARHEADING DEVELOPMENT ON THE BIGGEST COMPETITIVE STAGE. WE SPOKE TO THE FORMER SBK CHAMPION AND NGM FORWARD ATHLETE AS WELL AS TECHNICIANS AT LEATT TO ASK HOW THE PROJECT WAS EVOLVING...





FEATURE

Leatt have already stamped their mark when it comes to off-road motorcycling. The word has spread about neck protection and people are conscious of the role it can play. From the dunes of the Dakar Rally to the little riders on your local track, Leatt have been pivotal in changing attitudes and fighting to improve safety since the middle of the last decade.

The road, and road racing in particular, (the initial discipline that inspired Dr Chris Leatt to forego his medical practice and dedicate his professional life to creation of the protection) is new territory and has required some careful studies and research. The 'alternative load path' technology and theory remains in place but the hunched and squat position of a road bike has forced a constant and drawn-out process to assemble the best performing product. With Dorna's blessing, Leatt have been popping up in the MotoGP paddock on the eve of tests for the last two years. There is a feeling now that real gains are being made.

We grabbed a handful of the latest version of the STX RR at Catalunya where we gratefully asked Colin to pose for some pics and also invaded his fitting session on Thursday. The brace is incredibly light. We didn't get a handle on the exact weight but is next-to-nothing and pristinely carved from carbon and obviously to Edwards' preferences and specs, judging by his reactions to the device and from a first serious trial in Qatar back in March. Inside the brace are small magnets that attach themselves neatly over the 'hump' on the rider's suit. The Texan seems satisfied as he mock-leans off the NGM both sides as Scott MacFarlane from Leatt takes new measurements.

With the work finished we asked both parties about the state of play with the STX...





LEATT MotoGP





How did you get involved with Leatt and the work with the STX?

Obviously the motocross guys have been using it [the original GPX brace] for I-don't-know-how-long. It was an idea that came through one of my guys at the Bootcamp being approached by Leatt and then trying to develop something for road racing. It is fortunate for Leatt that I have a longer neck than most! There was quite a bit of room to figure out where to go with this! Working with the guys has been a pleasure, easy.

Were you initially sceptical how and if it would work?

Well, there are some issues. You can talk about wind drag. There are millions of dollars being spent in the pits to find that extra 2-3mph top speed, so it is hard to throw a device on is going to hurt that. It makes no sense if that is restricted. Safety-wise it is an improvement. My idea was that if we could come up with something safer with Leatt then let's go for it.

What were your first impressions from the test at the start of the year?

Honestly I didn't feel I was wearing it. Some of the motocross guys use it with nothing fixed [no straps] but that is not really an option for us because of the positions you get into when you are leaning off the bike. You need it to be in place when you are riding. In terms of riding with it on I didn't have an issue and didn't really know it was there. We just had to move it around and once it was fit snug then it was fine.

Did have to be sold on the idea for MotoGP?

Not really. You don't have to be a rocket scientist to work out what it does!

But neck protection still has to battle to convince some people...

I know...but I think you can go all the way back to the CTi knee brace and while people were 'yeah, the knee brace!' there were other snapping femurs. There are always Pros and Cons to everything but I know that I would rather break something like a collarbone than my neck.

So, even at this age and with all this experience you are still developing new stuff...

Yeah! Like I said, I'm fortunate with my body design, we have room to work! The initial development for fixing and attachment – not just for me but for other riders in the future – for other suits and integration was been the number one step. If you have a device that you can attach fifteen different ways then it is not really going to work. It needs to be a solid unit that - 'bang' - goes over your head and without any straps to jack-around with. Once we get to there then we move to the next step.

Will there also be a quest to change some attitudes to a brace for the road?

If you look at the Leatt story from '06 then it seems like in '09, '10 and '11 everybody had one on. Now you have some guys who don't wear it any more. If you go to Loretta's and the Mini Nationals then 38 out of 40 riders will have them. This is our younger generation of kids that the parents want to protect. You then have the other side, which are the Pro athletes who have their own reasoning for making a choice. For me...I think Leatt know where the larger market is and they are working on protecting the guys that want to be protected. You are always going to have guys that believe in it and others that don't. I do.

LEATT

How has development been for MotoGP and the STX-RR in comparison to the GPX and 5.5 off-road models?

Quite challenging, because the road racer has a very specific riding position that makes the helmet brace interface difficult to perfect. On top of this each rider has his own riding style, racing suit, aerodynamic hump and body shape. The challenge with road racing is that riders tend to tuck very far behind the screen and pretty much with their chin on the tank. The more 'straight-up' positioned riders can wear both the STX and the STX RR brace for on the road perfectly.

How long have you been working with Colin?

About a year. We had been in touch with him before for his Texas Tornado Off-Road Boot Camp. Colin is a great ambassador inside MotoGP in terms of safety so he has been very helpful to us. Last year in Valencia we tested the brace with him for the first time (not on the road yet) then at the start of the season in Qatar he got on the track. With this input we went back to make some modifications to the brace that were tested now in Barcelona.

What requests from him have been the most difficult to realise?

Integration with the racing suit and aerodynamic hump and making sure that aerodynamics are not negatively affected in any way.

What version of the brace was tested at Catalunya?

The standard STX RR with a custom made rear piece that interfaces with the aerodynamic hump and suits Colin's riding style.

Is the next step to fit more riders in MotoGP/SBK?

That's the long-term plan, yes. Currently we have James Egan already racing SBK wearing the STX RR, we have been doing many track days where people test the brace.

Are you nearing completion of a version that could be ready for production?

Like we said its quite challenging and we want to make sure that Colin is perfectly happy before we fit other riders. However, we feel that we are definitely getting closer to being production-ready. It's difficult to put a time frame to it at this stage.





LEATT MotoGP



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- STEFAN EVERTS
10X MX WORLD CHAMPION



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THE SAFEST BET...

By Gavin Emmett

Every now and then I will admit I like a bit of a flutter. Whether on a first goal scorer at the football or on a three-legged donkey at the horse-racing, a harmless bet every now and then just heightens the thrill of seeing your team/horse/rider win (or lose if you're the pessimistic sort or England fan).

In MotoGP so far this season, sticking your cash on Marc Marquez to win has been a bit like printing money, and the bookmakers have felt it; the latest odds for a Marquez success at this weekend's Dutch TT stands at a miserly 1/2 (for every two risked, a winning bet gets one back in return). Not great, but not the worst shout if you consider his form and the low interest rates being offered by the banks at the moment.

There are even bookmakers taking bets on Marquez to win every race this year, with the price having plummeted from well over 100/1 at the start of the year to a current best of 13/2. Many people both in and out of the paddock have already told me how they would definitely still take those odds, but I will definitely be steering clear and hanging on to my hard-earned pennies.

As Marquez has said himself this week, he knows the run will come to an end at some point - it simply has to. In the 65 seasons of grand prix motorcycling only two riders have completed a clean sweep - Giacomo Agostini on an MV in 1968, the year after Honda withdrew from the series, and John Surtees in just a seven-race 1959 championship. Ago went on to win 20 races in a row (all of 1968 and the first ten of 1969) and although Marquez certainly has the talent to match the Italian's achievements, from my point of view there is too

much talent all around him to allow it to happen. The last two races have shown everyone that he is definitely beatable this season, which is an odd thing to say when he has added another 50 points to his tally in Italy and Catalonia. However, Pedrosa challenged to the end in Barcelona after having taken his first pole in a year, and Rossi and Lorenzo have both been in close attendance.

All three will take heart from the fact that they have finally witnessed first-hand that Marquez is capable of making mistakes; as he finally did with his season's first crash during qualifying and when he almost took out Rossi's rear wheel in the race.

As they defiantly close the gap, the series heads to the legendary Dutch venue at Assen, which generally has a way of throwing up a surprise - last year it was Lorenzo's collarbone break and subsequent fifth place, and Valentino Rossi sealing a first win in his Yamaha return. Ben Spies took his only ever GP win there in 2011, and is still the last time a rider outside the Marquez, Rossi, Lorenzo, Pedrosa, Stoner axis of 'aliens' won a race. Who could also forget the 2006 epic with Nicky Hayden taking the win from Colin Edwards despite the duo both taking to the gravel in the final corner?

History is all around you when you're in Assen, but I have a sneaky suspicion this weekend could see the end of Marquez's run to creating a new chapter. However, I won't be putting my money where my mouth is.



MOTOGP



HIT REPEAT

THEY ARE GETTING CLOSER. SHORTLY AFTER MARC MARQUEZ'S EXCITING VICTORY AT LE MANS THE OPPOSITION GAVE HIM MORE TO THINK ABOUT FOR VICTORY NUMBER SEVEN ON HOME TURE...

Photos by Martin Heath www.martinheathphoto.com
Stats by Dr Martin Raines

MotoGP CATALUNYA

At Catalunya Marquez became the joint-thirteenth most successful GP rider of all time while Pedrosa moved up to third in the podium list of all classes with 89 trophies. He has to reach 152 to knock The Doctor from the top spot



PLAY



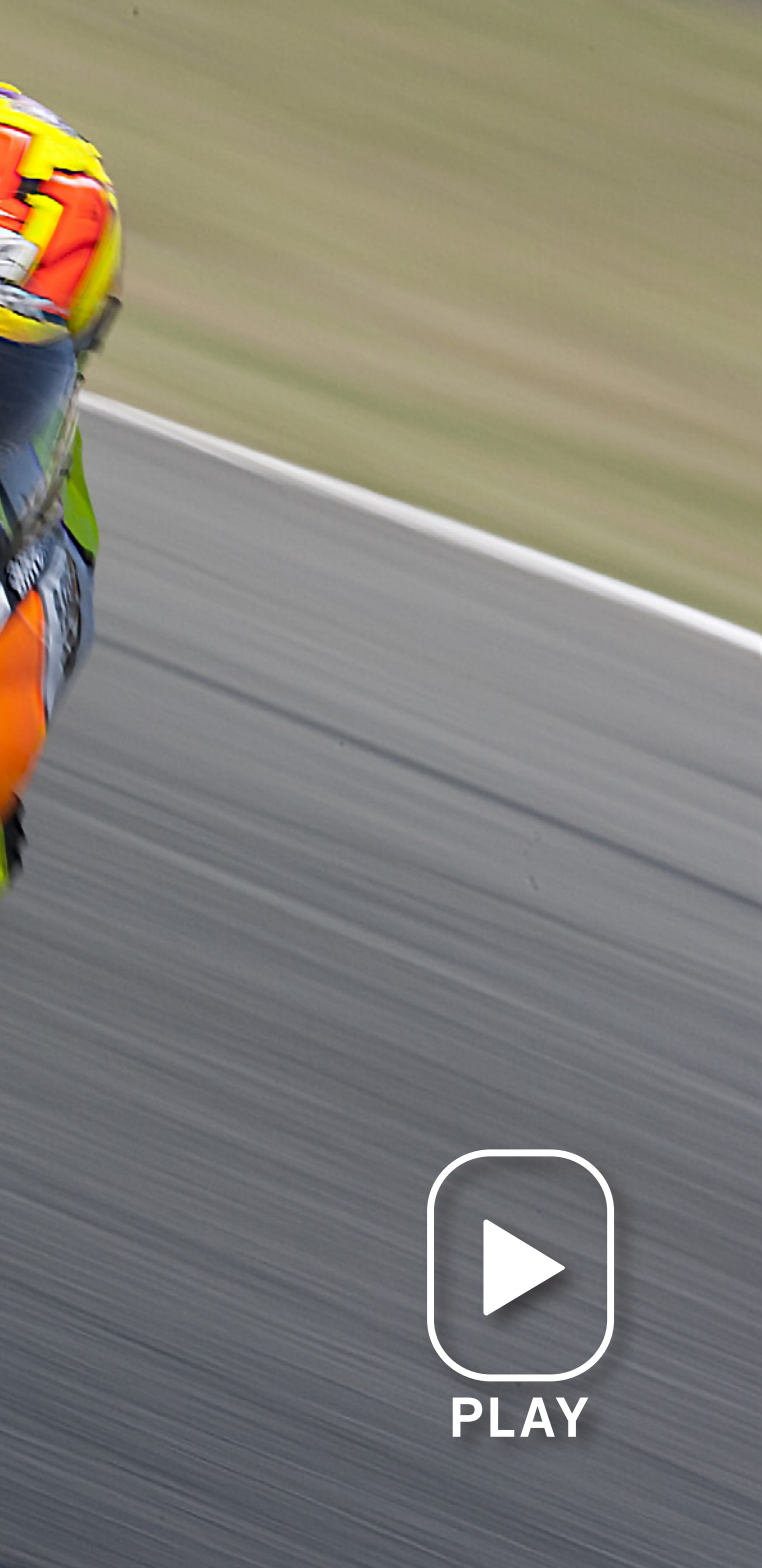
Moto3 win for Alex Marquez gave Honda a first victory of the season. His 3.2 second margin was the biggest for two years in the category





Aleix Espargaro is pushing hard to take the spotlight away from his brother and sixth position at Montmelo was another good day at the office for the Catalan. Assen will see his 150th GP start







If you can't beat em...? Rossi shows his adaptation to MotoGP and the Marquez-era through this Martin Heath image revealing a variation of style. The trip to Assen this week gives VR46 a sweet chance of ending the Honda streak



PLAY

Assen this week will signify 22 years since Alex Criville became the first Spanish winner in the premier class. 97 triumphs later and will Jorge Lorenzo lift this total to 98 for his nation in Holland?



MotoGP CATALUNYA



SBK

ROUND 7 MISANO

MISANO WORLD CIRCUIT MARCO SIMONCELLI

Race 1 winner: Tom Sykes, Kawasaki

Race 2 winner: Tom Sykes, Kawasaki



I • JUNE 22nd • Rnd 7 of 13

WORLD SBK MIS

Against the odds Sykes benefitted from a 'great feeling' with the Kawasaki and admitted the second of his two wins came a bit easier with a bad wrist courtesy of his Sepang prang

MISANO GOES GREEN

NOT TOO MUCH STRESS FOR TOM SYKES TO REASSERT CONTROL ON WSBK WITH A DOUBLE WIN AHEAD OF PODIUMMEES LORIS BAZ AND MARCO MELANDRI. ROUND EIGHT HEADS TO PORTUGAL

Photos by Honda Pro images, Kawasaki Racing Team, Milagro, Ducati Corse Press, suzuki-racing.com, Aprilia Racing







Jonathan Rea broke into the top five in the second race with some ballsy moves. The Brit admitted that the team could not get the best of the Honda again in Italy



Hard to tell from this image but Giugliano had grip problems at his home round (another one). 8th and 9th was the best the Ducati star could manage



WORLD SBK MIS

SBK CLASSIFICATION & CHAMPIONSHIP

SBK RACE ONE RESULT

Riders

1	Tom Sykes, GBR	Kawasaki
2	Loris Baz, FRA	Kawasaki
3	Marco Melandri, ITA	Aprilia
4	Chaz Davies, GBR	Ducati
5	Sylvain Guintoli, FRA	Aprilia

SBK RACE TWO RESULT

Riders

1	Tom Sykes, GRB	Kawasaki
2	Loris Baz, FRA	Kawasaki
3	Marco Melandri, ITA	Aprilia
4	Sylvain Guintoli, FRA	Aprilia
5	Jonathan Rea, GBR	Honda

SBK CHAMPIONSHIP STANDINGS (7 of 14 rounds)

Riders

1	Tom Sykes, GBR	251
2	Sylvain Guintoli, FRA	212
3	Loriz Baz, FRA	210
4	Jonathan Rea, GBR	199
5	Marco Melandri, ITA	179



Lavery battled a foot injury at Misano.
Seventh place was damage limitation but
will the Irishman be fit for Assen?

WORLD SBK MIS



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VIEW FROM THE SOFA...

By Graeme Brown



I wasn't in Misano this weekend for round seven of WSBK. My son was involved with the Queen's Baton relay for the 2014 Commonwealth Games so family duties took precedence.

A regular talking point in the paddock this year has been the Sunday race timetable, designed to fit around TV schedules for Formula 1. It has taken time to adjust at the races so it was interesting to see how it would work from the comfort of my sofa.

To be honest it turned out a bit like Christmas Day. It was a bit of a shock to be up and have breakfast on the go for 8:45am on Sunday morning and the start of the coverage on Eurosport UK. There was little or no break between the first Superbike and the Supersport races, and not much more to the second Superbike Race, just enough for another cuppa and some more Sugar Puffs. So it was lunchtime and I was still in my pyjamas by the time we were done. It was then off for a quick shower and get dressed before being ready for the Queen's Baton Relay as opposed to the Queen's speech.

Thankfully he didn't drop it.

Much like Tom Sykes this weekend. Having injured his hand in the much talked about Sepang crash with team-mate Loris Baz he appeared to be struggling in Friday and Saturday's practice, not doing many laps and a few tenths off the pace. An adrenalin-fueled Superpole lap put him on pole position however and Sunday saw him turn in two truly masterful performances to take a double win and Kawasaki's first at Misano since Scott Russell on his Muzzy Kawasaki ZXR in 1994, incidentally with the No.1 plate on his bike as well.

It also reminded me of comments Carl Fogarty once gave about rarely topping the timesheets in free practice and qualifying. He explained that on Friday and Saturday his Ducati team worked on race pace, judging themselves against their main rivals. He went into Sunday's races knowing that if he was on the front row or head of the second row, and got a clean start, he had the race pace to win or at least place on the podium.

It seems that Sykes and his crew chief Marcel Diunker have mastered that theory as well but have added the jewel in the crown that Sykes can stick in a stellar lap in qualifying. His post race comments bare this out where he thanked both Diunker and Data technician Danilo Casonato for their hard work on the weekend.

The other big story on the weekend was the withdrawal of the Russian Yakhnich Motorsport group from the MV Agusta team. The official press release stated that an agreement had been reached that MV Agusta Motor S.p.A. would take over all operations of the team in both WSBK and WSS.

Unfortunately the problem seemed to be down to a lack of financial support for the Yakhnich group. Owner Alexander Yakhnich had found it difficult to find sponsors for the team at the start of the year from Russia due to the focus on the Winter Olympics. However the crisis in Ukraine and its financial implications in Russia as impacted and a potential sponsor they had has now withdrawn. Whilst it was not used as an excuse I can't help think that the loss of their home race from the calendar this year would have had a negative impact on the situation as well. It didn't seem to affect the performance of the team, however, where Jules Cluzel was as imperious on the F3 in WSS as Sykes was in WSBK. Lets hope they can regroup and come back to the paddock soon.



TEST

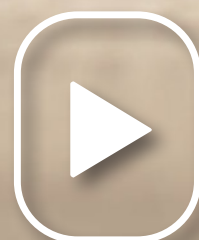
JUST CRUISE

**AFTER LOOKS AT DEUS EX MACHINA AND 100%'S BARSTOW GOGGLES THE AMERICANA
THEME CONTINUES IN OTOR AND THIS TIME ROLAND BROWN DECIDED TO PUT
TRIUMPH'S LATEST CRUISER OFFERINGS THROUGH THEIR PACES**

By Roland Brown, Photos by Alessio Barbanti, Paul Barshon, Freddy Kirn & Tom Riles



TRIUMPH CRUISERS



PLAY

T

riumphs have long been popular in the United States, whether winning races ridden by Gary Nixon and Gene Romero in the Sixties and Seventies, looking cool with Steve McQueen or co-starring with Marlon Brando in *The Wild One*. Famous Triumph models including the Daytona and Bonneville celebrated the marque's racing and record-breaking feats in the US, and sold there in huge numbers.

But although the current Triumph firm has been reporting impressive sales increases across the globe, one area the Hinckley marque hasn't truly cracked since being relaunched more than 20 years ago is the lucrative US market. Numerous Triumph models are prominent in their market segments, but if a motorcycle manufacturer aspires to serious sales success in the States, the most important task is to develop a big, laid-back roadster with a generous dose of retro charm. Or better still, two of them.

Hence the arrival of the Thunderbird LT and Commander, both based on the existing Thunderbird cruiser and conceived in Hinckley with one eye looking across the Atlantic. The bigger and more eye-catching of the duo is the LT, standing for Light Touring, whose resemblance to Harley-Davidson's Road King is no coincidence. With its screen, panniers and footboards, the LT is aimed squarely at the retro touring sector. The naked Commander uses many of the same components but is a classical cruiser with swept-back handlebar, chunky fenders and plenty of attitude.



TRIUMPH CRUISERS



TEST

The bigger LT in particular is a notably eye-catching machine, with its two-tone paintwork, copious chrome and distinctly, though inaccurately, American look. The big parallel twin powerplant is impressively flexible, so the Triumph pulls sweetly almost from idle and cruises effortlessly with a smooth and laid-back feel. It sounds involving, too, thanks to a new flap in the exhaust.

Handling is good despite the substantial 380kg of weight, combining stability with a neutral, precise steering feel. In dry bends the footboards touch down before the white-wall Avon tyres approach their grip limits, but at least the boards have replaceable scrapers. There's plenty of braking power too, thanks to four-piston Nissin front calipers with ABS as standard. Perhaps the most impressive aspect of Tri-

umph's new chassis is its comfort. Ride quality is excellent thanks partly to the dual-rate shocks. And the seat's lumbar support really works, acting like a mini back-rest. Sat gripping the wide, raised bars behind the usefully protective screen, the Thunderbird feels very capable of using its range of around 200 miles.





TRIUMPH CRUISERS



TEST



TRIUMPH CRUISERS

The LT is versatile too. Unclipping the screen and removing the leather panniers (quickly done via two bolts on each side) leaves a much leaner but similarly stylish bike for shorter trips. And the LT also scores with its price, which (at £14,000 in the UK) is considerably lower than those of its closest Harley rivals.

The Commander is the more basic of the two T-birds, with a stripped-down look whose most striking feature is a pair of chrome-backed headlights. It shares its 1699cc engine and most chassis parts with the LT, and has a lower handlebar that gives a similarly upright riding position. On the road it feels fractionally quicker, as much due to its lack of wind protection as to the 30kg weight advantage.

Handling is subtly lighter too, though still limited by ground clearance. Revised suspension gives a similarly compliant ride, backed up by that cleverly designed seat. Inevitably the Commander can't match the LT for long-haul comfort, but a screen and panniers are available as accessories. As the price difference is small (£1000 in the UK), the more generously equipped LT would seem better value for most riders.

Either way, the T-birds offer a tempting blend of American style and British engineering. Triumph can still only dream of emulating the marque's US glory days of the late Sixties, when Gary Nixon was Grand National champ and Americans bought Bonneville's by the boat-load. But both these Brits have enough appeal to give the US-built V-twins some competition, on their home patch or anywhere else.



MUNICH

Hmm, a MotoGP rider endorsement and fashion product that actually looks pretty good. Marc Marquez launched his official association with Catalan shoe company Munich last week in Barcelona and the range of three trainers (with eight different designs/schemes) and bags carry the distinctive '93' as well as the 'X' of the premium brand.

Munich was a personal choice by Marquez as he explains: "Around the time of winning my first championship in 2010 I was using Munich just generally in the street and I can remember going to a special place in the market where I could get a discount! I met the president of the company that year and the relationship started."

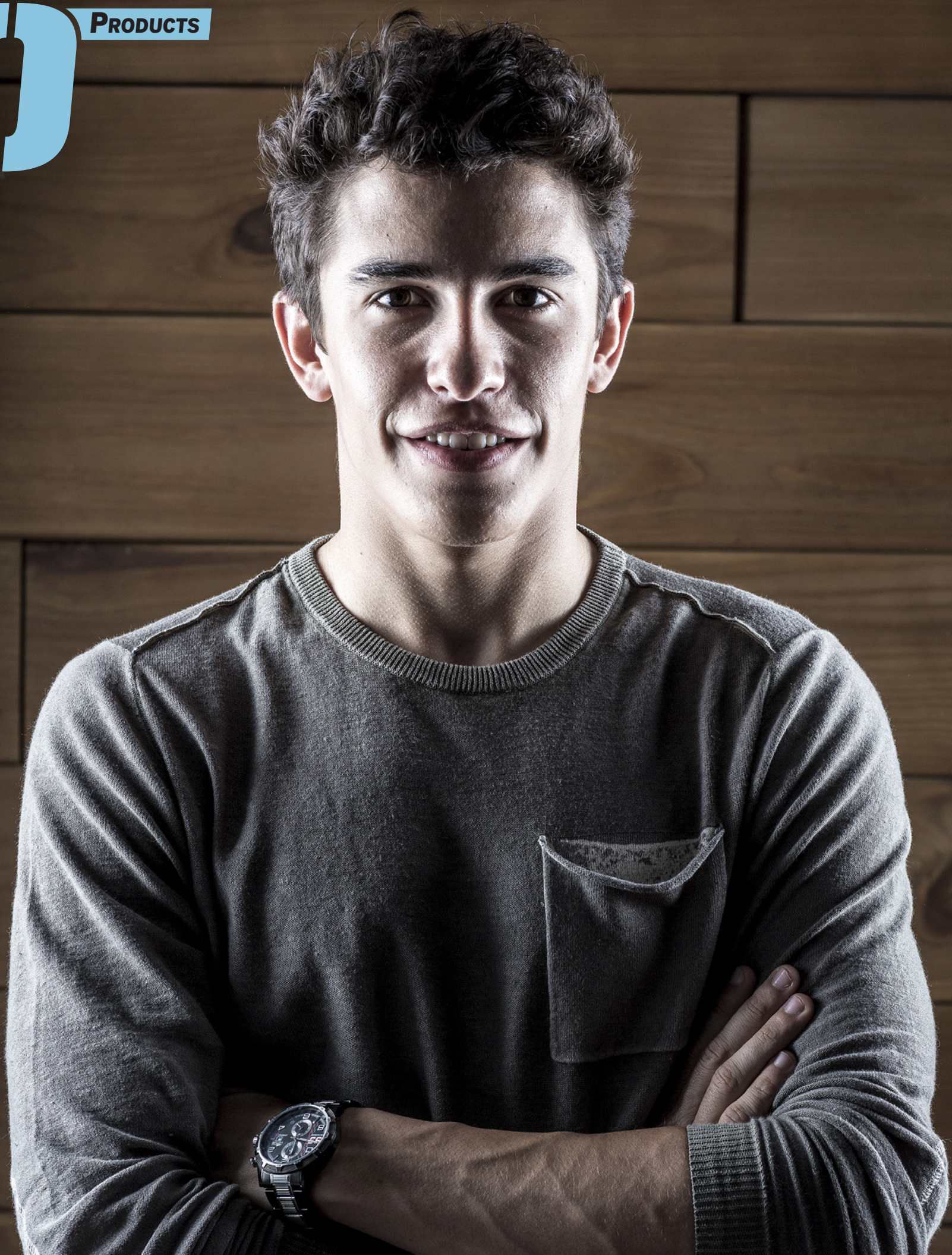
"Now things are becoming a bit more serious," he continued. "I liked to participate in the design of the shoes because, in the end, they are my trainers. The thing I like about Munich is just the style. Everyone has their own tastes and preferences and mine just matched with this company. I liked the sporty look."

Marquez fronts a publicity campaign with the slogan 'Character makes the difference' and at the launch of the products the twenty year old is on good form, with plenty of media attention; hardly surprising considering his seventh straight victory on home soil the previous Sunday. Marquez is in demand and the Munich deal is a consequence of his success. "When things go well on the track then off it tends to follow the same way," he said. "We are on a good line at the moment."

The bags carry his ant helmet logo as well as the '93', so labelled for the year of his birth. Apparently the goods will hit shops in Catalunya in September before spreading quickly to the rest of Spain and then internationally by the end of the year. The trainers are called 'Racer', 'Xtrem' and the high tops are 'Stretch'.







MARC ON...

Continuing his MotoGP run...

Apart from all the records, wins and fuss the most important goal is that title because that is the only thing that people seem to remember. Nothing is impossible and through always giving 100% we have won what we have so far. I never wanted to race for records. The first reason was always for fun and to be able to go for those titles. To be in contention you need to be smart and consistent.

On Jorge Lorenzo...

I think my first year in MotoGP was a lot like his; fighting for wins, fast but with many crashes and it seems we have made a bit of a reference for first-timers! This year hasn't started so well for him but he has been training hard and he will end up going for more victories, for sure.

On front publicity campaigns...

I like that Munich has such an indentifiable logo and brand, and together [with MM93] it makes a strong association I think. I get quite embarrassed by photo-shoots to be honest. I'm better at the track and with a helmet on! However it is good to be able to reach even more people about the sport.



ALPINESTARS

It is two weeks after the MotoGP at Catalunya but we wanted to show off these superb custom race boots for the launch of the FIFA World Cup that Alpinestars produced for their top athletes and unveiled with an impromptu kick about on the track Thursday before the Grand Prix. Marc Marquez's 'boots' were a fantastic bit of painting on the Supertech R model – that the Catalan then destroyed in his crash trying to seize Pole Position on Saturday. Being patriotic we have to show Cal Crutchlow's 'Three Lions' and we are in no way implying that the Ducati rider jinxed England's subsequent performance in Brazil.

The disappointing part of Alpinestars showing off a novel initiative like this is the knowledge that this custom gear is unlikely to ever see the inside of a shop or dealer. No doubt some of the designs would be eagerly in demands and coupled with the top performance of the product, well, it is a no-brainer. Getting technical Alpinestars, who produced the boots at their base in Asolo in northern Italy, stated they were painted on the: 'micro-fiber chassis as the main 'canvas' for the graphics, each design has been directly printed onto the surface of the upper part of the boots, flex areas and gaiter. The polymer protection sections used for the shin and ankle has also been created with the required color finishes through the injection moulding process used to create the specially formulated, aerodynamic, profiles.'







BACKPAGE

Monster Energy Girls
Ray Archer







.....

'On-track Off-road' is a free, bi-weekly publication for the screen focused on bringing the latest perspectives on events, blogs and some of the very finest photography from the three worlds of the FIM Motocross World Championship, the AMA Motocross and Supercross series' and MotoGP. 'On-track Off-road' will be published online at www.ontrackoffroad.com every other Tuesday. To receive an email notification that a new issue available with a brief description of each edition's contents simply enter an address in the box provided on the homepage. All email addresses will be kept strictly confidential and only used for purposes connected with OTOR.

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